

Message Text

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71

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3131

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, AR

SUBJ: CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF GOA REACTION TO US MEMORANDA

1. SUMMARY: LA NACION COLUMNIST JOSE ESCRIBANO INDICATES ORIGINAL IDEA TO MAKE MEMORANDA PUBLIC ISSUE WAS FINANCE MINISTER GELBARD'S, BUT THAT OSCAR ALENDE HAD GRATUITOUSLY TAKEN INITIATIVE ON PNG ACTION AGAINST CHARGE TO EMBARRASS GOVT. ANOTHER, LESS LIKELY, VERSION IS THAT PERON ORDERED THE PUBLICATION OF THE MEMORANDA OVER GELBARD'S OBJECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. LA NACION'S POLITICAL EDITORIAL ON SUNDAY, AUG 5, WRITTEN BY JOSE ESCRIBANO, TAKES LINE LATTER HAD PREVIOUSLY ARTICULATED TO EMBOFF. THRUST IS THAT REACTION TO US MEMORANDA HAS GONE FURTHER THAN GOA INTENDED. PNG ACTION WAS INITIATED BY INTRANSIGENTE LEADER OSCAR ALENDE, NOT BY GOA, AND LATTER HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN PRESSING IT. ESCRIBANO SPECULATES IN SUNDAY COLUMN THAT IN VIEW KREBS' PAST REPUTATION FOR PRUDENTLY CARRYING OUT INSTRUCTIONS OF DEPT, IT TO BE ASSUMED THAT HE HAD NOT DRAFTED MEMORANDA AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN INADVERTENT SLIP IN REVIEWING CAREFULLY THE TRANSLATIONS. THIS, HE CONCLUDED, DID NOT EXCUSE THE FACT THAT CERTAIN OF THE PRARGRAPHS WERE UNACCEPTABLE, EVEN IF THE MEMORANDA HAD BEEN INVITED BY HIGH

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ARGENTINE CIRCLES.

3. PRIVATELY, ESCRIBANO TOLD EMBOFF HIS SOURCES HAD INDICATED FINANCE MINISTER GELBARD HAD CONSULTED WITH PERON BUT WAS HIMSELF THE AUTHOR OF MANEUVER TO MAKE MEMORANDA PUBLIC ISSUE, MOTIVE BEING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY THROW NATIONALIST MANTLE OVER HIMSELF AND HIS PROGRAM.

4. CONFLICTING VERSION FROM ANOTHER SOURCE SUGGESTS IDEA WAS PERON'S NOT GELBARD'S, AND THAT INDEED BELBARD WAS VERY MUCH AGAINST MAKING ISSUE OF MATTER, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER NEGATIVE IMPACT ON FOREIGN INVESTMENTS. ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION, PERON OVERRODE GELBARD'S OBJECTIONS.

5. IN BOTH VERSIONS, PERON GAVE APPROVAL FOR LEAKING MEMORANDA TO PRESS, AND INDEED, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE WOULD HAVE PROCEEDED WITHOUT HIS PRIOR APPROVAL. SECOND VERSION HAS GELBARD OBJECTING. THIS STRIKES US AS UNLIKELY. GELBARD HAD MORE TO GAIN THAN ANYONE IN GOVT. LEFT WILL NOW FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTACK HIM OR HIS PROGRAMS. FURTHER, HIS ALLEGED CONCERN OVER IMPACT ON FOREIGN INVESTMENTS SEEMS HARDLY TO THE POINT. HIS LAW ON FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IS LIKELY TO HAVE FAR MORE NEGATIVE IMPACT THAN WILL INCIDENT ARISING FROM MEMORANDA.

6. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HOWEVER IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHETHER IT WAS GELBARD'S OR PERON'S IDEA ORIGINALLY. BOTH ABOVE VERSIONS AGREE THAT IT WAS GELBARD WHO INITIATED IMPLEMENTING ACTION AND THAT, AT THE VERY LEAST, HE HAD PERON'S APPROVAL.

7. TAKING PERON'S APPROVAL AS A GIVEN, ONE CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS TO WHAT THAT MAY INDICATE WITH RESPECT TO HIS RELATIONSHIP TO LASTIRI, SINCE LATTER IS THE ONE MAN IN THE PERONIST HIERARCHY WHOSE POSITION COULD SUFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE MEMORANDA AFFAIR.
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